Alberta Plan for Action For Women:

A Proud History, A Bright Future

July 1989

Alberta
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

89-06223/

A Message From The Honourable Don R. Getty Premier

As we build toward tomorrow, it is with great pleasure and satisfaction that I introduce a major new initiative--the Alberta Plan for Action for Women. The Plan for Action reflects priorities expressed by women and men throughout the Province, and my government's sincere commitment to take action in response to this input.

Albertans are proud of the vital contributions made by women throughout the history of this Province, and want to ensure that women can continue to develop their strengths and potential. Today, and in the future, my government will be a supportive partner in this endeavour, for we firmly believe that improving the status of women will ultimately lead to stronger families, stronger communities, and a stronger Alberta.

The Plan for Action is a forward-looking strategy within which we will provide leadership in building a bright future for the women of Alberta. Under the guidance of the Plan for Action, and through cooperative efforts between all levels of government, the community, and individuals, I am confident that we will continue to make considerable progress toward the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of life in this Province.

Don R. Getty

Don R. Getty
Premier

A Message From The Honourable Minister Responsible for Women's Issues

Through their strength and dedication, the women of Alberta have already made significant strides toward the goals which are important to them, and governments have been their partners in progress. As Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, I am particularly proud of the Government of Alberta's commitment to improving the status of women. Over the years, we have implemented a number of initiatives that have created new opportunities and exciting challenges for the women of this Province. However, we recognize that more must be done to achieve full equality for the women of Alberta.

It was with this thought clearly in mind that the Alberta Plan for Action for Women was forged. Within these pages are listed the goals which form the long-term framework for Government-wide action in the areas of the family, the workplace, education and training, health, the community, and the Alberta public service. Each year, Government departments involved in the Plan for Action will undertake specific initiatives aimed at achieving these goals.

I am proud of our commitment to the women of Alberta, and proud of the citizens of this Province who want to create a society in which women can participate in a real and full sense in economic, social, and political life. I know that by working together, we will achieve this objective.

Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to present the Alberta Plan for Action for Women.

Elaine McCoy, Q.C.
Minister Responsible for
Women's Issues

A Proud History

Strong Women

The women of Alberta have always played a vital role in the lives of their families and communities and in bringing about social change. Alberta's history is peppered with stories of strong women like Alice Jamieson, who in 1914 was appointed judge of the juvenile court. In accepting the appointment, she became the first female judge anywhere in the British Empire. Two years later, Emily Murphy followed her lead and became the first woman magistrate in Canada to preside over a Women's Court. Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams gave Alberta another first in 1917 when they became the first women elected to a legislature in the British Empire.

Twelve years later, a group of five Alberta women including Louise McKinney and Emily Murphy, as well as Henrietta Edwards, Nellie McClung and Irene Parlby won a major political victory for Canadian women--the right to be viewed as "persons" under the law and the right to be named to the Senate.

As the "Famous Five" were fighting for the right to sit in the Senate, other Alberta women were hard at work on other tasks. Native women continued to be the backbones of their communities, passing on Native culture, and in many different ways, improving the quality of life in Alberta. Immigrant women newly arrived from many areas of the world were also enriching Alberta with their own unique contributions, as were the female descendents of the early European settlers.

As these individual women worked to improve conditions for themselves and their families, women's organizations such as the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Catholic Women's League, were contributing greatly to the well being of a growing Alberta through their charitable activities. Alberta locals of the National Council of Women were devoting their attention to such matters as equal parental control and homes for the aged. The improvement of social conditions in rural communities was the major concern of the Women's Institutes of Alberta. Home nursing, child welfare, and sanitation also came under their careful scrutiny.

Today, women's organizations are more active and more diversified than ever before. Alberta now has several hundred women's organizations. Some groups address general issues related to the status of women. Others deal with specific issues such as reproductive health, child care and family violence. Still others respond to the concerns of specific groups such as Native women, rural women, and immigrant women.

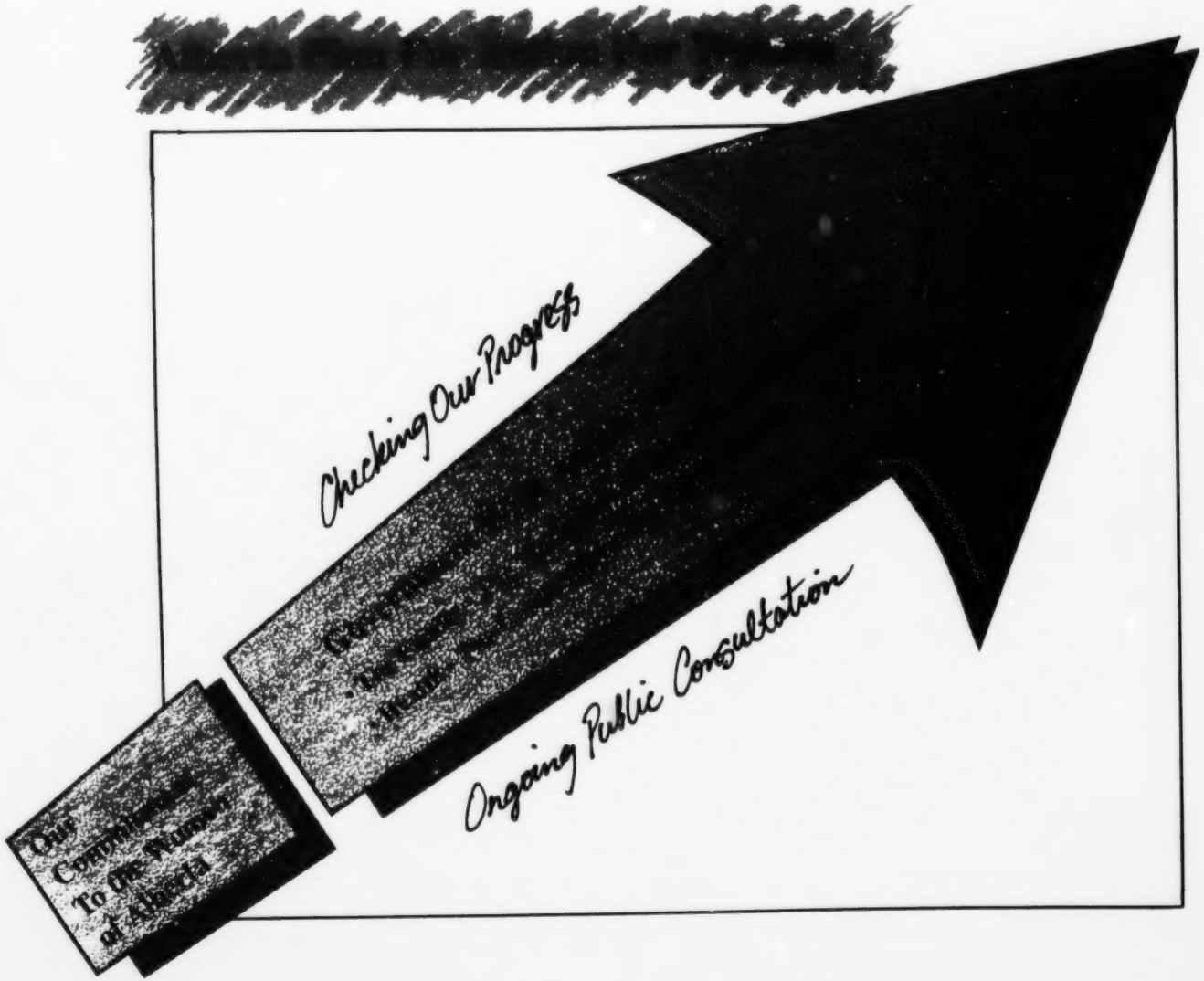
Albertans are justifiably proud of their famous women and of the women's organizations that have worked so hard to enhance life in this Province. In fact, we are proud of all Alberta women because each one contributes to Alberta society. Today, Alberta women are caregivers, artisans, farmers... They are workers, entrepreneurs, homemakers... They are leaders, visionaries, role models... And there is strength in all of these women.

Strong Partners

There is strength, too, in the tradition of partnership between Albertans and their governments. During the first decades of the 20th century, Alberta women provided the impetus for governments to introduce some of the most progressive laws in Canada.

This tradition continues. In recent years, the Government of Alberta has passed a wide variety of legislation and created many programs and services which are of particular benefit to women.

Today, as Alberta women face new social and economic challenges, the Alberta Government recognizes the need to continue its leadership role in helping women build a better and stronger future for themselves, their families and their society. As a committed partner, the Government is proud to introduce a major new initiative--**The Alberta Plan for Action for Women.**


Our Commitment To the Future of Alberta
Checking Our Progress
Ongoing Public Consultation

A Bright Future

Our Commitment To The Women of Alberta

The Alberta Plan for Action for Women is a framework for the future--a forward looking strategy for the 1990's and beyond. The Plan for Action is consistent with the Government's major policy document titled "Caring and Responsibility: A Statement of Social Policy for Alberta". As noted in this document:

"The Government of Alberta recognizes that social and economic development are inseparable. It is committed to building on our tradition of caring for each other and ensuring a quality of life in which all Albertans can participate democratically and share fully on equal terms in the rich cultural, economic, and social diversity of their province and in its future development.

The government will provide the necessary leadership and overall responsibility for provincial social policies, and will provide support and resources to create an environment in which Albertans can work together, be self-reliant, and take responsibility for their own lives, their families and their communities.

Government policies and programs will be designed to promote cooperative and independent initiatives of individual Albertans while at the same time ensuring that those who, for a variety of reasons, must depend on social programs for support are able to live dignified and meaningful lives."

This statement of social policy offers a direction for the Province to follow in addressing issues of concern to women. Today, and in the future, the Government is committed to ensuring that women have the opportunity for full and equal participation in the life of the Province and for developing fully their strengths and potential. Improving the status of women will ultimately lead to stronger women, stronger families, stronger communities, and a stronger Alberta.

The statement of social policy recognizes the desire of women to live in a humane and dignified manner and reflects a philosophy that stresses individual initiative, independence and responsibility. It reflects the view that Government policies, programs and services must complement and support the choices and decisions that women make. Finally, the statement is consistent with the tradition of this Province which is built on a firm foundation of strong and enterprising women who are prepared to accept challenges, take decisive actions, and accept responsibility for their actions.

Government-wide Action

In keeping with our commitment to the women of Alberta, the Government will undertake action in the major target areas of:

- Women and the Family
- Women in the Workplace
- Women in Education and Training
- Women and Health
- Women in the Community
- Women in the Public Service

The goals to be achieved in each area are listed on the following pages. Each year, the Government will announce the specific initiatives which will be implemented under the Plan and will identify the responsible departments.

Checking Our Progress

The Minister responsible for each Department will report to the Premier and Cabinet on an annual basis regarding progress on the Plan. In addition, Departments will continue to consider the needs and concerns of Alberta women in all the work they do.

Ongoing Public Consultation

In developing the Plan for Action, Government consulted widely with the people of Alberta. This consultation was crucial during the development of the Plan. It remains crucial now that the Plan has been implemented. Nothing stays the same forever. More effective solutions are discovered. Old issues change. New issues arise. The Plan for Action outlined within these pages is just a beginning--a framework which can be built upon by concerned Albertans. With continuing input from all stakeholders, the Plan for Action will grow and adapt and carry us into the 1990's and beyond.

Plan For Action Goals

Women And The Family

Today, women in Alberta families face new challenges arising from the economic and social transitions of the last few decades. Measures which respond to the needs of women in the family and help them remain strong despite the challenges they face are of vital importance in this time of change. With this in mind, the Government intends:

- to promote the health and well-being of the family unit in Alberta, recognizing the diversity of family structures and the need to ensure their equal treatment in legislation, policy and programs,
- to improve societal attitudes regarding work in the home and child care so that these activities are recognized as valuable and meaningful work in which both women and men should share,
- to promote an environment which supports and encourages the successful harmonization of work and family responsibilities, and
- to promote economic equity for women in the home.

Women In The Workplace

Between 1981 and 1986, an astounding 94% of employment growth in Canada was accounted for by the growing numbers of working women. Close to six of every ten women in Alberta are now working for pay outside the home. The current rate for Alberta men is seven out of ten. Another dramatic change in the Alberta workplace in recent years is the rise in the number of successful female entrepreneurs.

The Government of Alberta recognizes these new realities and also recognizes that the future economic growth of Alberta depends on making the best possible use of all our human resources. We are therefore committed to building a framework within which women can develop fully their own strengths and potential and can contribute fully and equally to the economic growth of this Province. Working as a partner with Albertans, the Government intends:

- to ensure that women participate as equal partners in the economic future of Alberta,

- to ensure that women have a full range of options and choices with respect to their careers,
- to promote policies and attitudes which support women's choices and recognize the important contribution of women to the growth and health of the economy,
- to ensure that women receive fair and just treatment in the workplace, and
- to promote recognition and support for women entrepreneurs as essential partners in Alberta's economic future.

Women In Education And Training

Through education and training, women can achieve economic equity, and the Province can benefit fully from their talents. We must be concerned with education and training for girls and young women. But today, learning is not only for the young. Many adults are also seeking learning opportunities because of personal, social, or economic circumstances. Therefore, the Government intends:

- to promote equality for women in education and training in Alberta and expand education and training opportunities for women to ensure their full and equal participation in the economic life of the Province,
- to ensure that women have the information and opportunities they need to set and achieve personal and career goals,
- to promote the continuing development of curricula and materials in the primary, secondary, and post-secondary systems that will enable girls and young women to make choices on the basis of sound knowledge and information, and
- to address the economic, social, cultural and structural barriers that affect women's access to education and training programs, recognizing that many women combine post-secondary education with family responsibilities.

Women and Health

Health care in Alberta is a partnership between a responsible Government and responsible citizens who take steps to safeguard and improve their own health. As a caring partner, the Government recognizes that women have special needs. The Government also recognizes that while health is clearly influenced by an individual's decisions about lifestyle, it is also significantly affected by broad economic and social factors which may be beyond the individual's control. Given these concerns, the Government intends:

- to promote awareness of women's special health needs, and ensure that these needs are met through the cooperative efforts of government, health practitioners, educators, and members of the general public,
- to promote research and data collection on health issues of concern to women,
- to promote healthy lifestyles and preventive health care practices for women, and
- to pay particular attention to reproductive health concerns and implement necessary policies and programs.

Women In The Community

Enhancing the role of women in all areas of community living will benefit the whole of Alberta society. To achieve this end, the Government intends:

- to increase opportunities for women to participate in public life,
- to enable women to continue to contribute to Alberta's strong tradition of volunteerism and to promote the recognition of the valuable contributions women make, as well as the skills and experience they gain through these activities,
- to promote the use of positive images of women,
- to promote a safe society for women in Alberta through the elimination of violence against women, and
- to provide information and support to community groups and agencies whose aim is to provide assistance to women in difficulty or women who have special needs.

Women In The Alberta Public Service

As one of the largest employers in the Province, the Government of Alberta is fully committed to making equality of opportunity a reality for women in the Alberta Public Service and to acting as a role model for other employers in the Province. Accordingly, the Government intends:

- to demonstrate its continuing commitment to employment equity in the Alberta Public Service by undertaking visible strategies and by measuring progress, and
- to implement funding and training initiatives which will lead to increased opportunities for women in the Alberta Public Service in all occupational groups and in management positions.